



Israel Studies International MA Program

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Jews, Judaism and Jewish Nationalism in Modern Times

Prof. Arie Saposnik

Spring Semester 2018

Tuesday, 8:30-10:00

**Sde Boker Campus, The Ben Gurion Research Institute for the Study of
Israel and Zionism**

Course Description:

The state of Israel was founded based on the notion that the Jews worldwide constitute a nation, and that they are hence deserving of a nation-state. This was not necessarily a self-evident proposition to all. Modern Zionism—the Jewish national movement that sought the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine—emerged in the nineteenth century as one among a wide array of Jewish responses to the challenges of modernity. Some of these responses understood Judaism, or Jewishness, to be based in a common nationhood. Zionism, in other words, was for many years one among a variety of Jewish national ideas and projects. Other Jewish responses to modernity understood (and sought to recast) the essence of Judaism, or Jewishness, in different terms—as based in religion, class, or civilization, for example. Some of these movements and ideas evinced differing degrees of sympathy or indifference to the idea of Jewish nationhood; others were passionately opposed, and even hostile, to such notions.

This course seeks to understand the emergence of the idea (or ideas) of Jewish nationalism, how it understood its relationship to the Jewish past, and its vision of a Jewish future. Moreover, it will attempt to chart the ways in which Jewish national activists of various stripes sought to construct an actual Jewish nation and grant the Jews a national life.

Course Requirements:

- **Attendance and Participation:** Students are expected to attend class regularly and to participate actively. Participation, of course, must be based on consistent reading of the relevant materials for each given meeting. The class will be conducted seminar-style, and all students are expected to be active participants and to prepare points for discussion of the reading material.
- **In-Class Presentations:** Over the course of the semester, each student will select reading materials to present in class. These presentations should go beyond surveying the material and venture into textual and methodological analysis as

well as evaluation of the arguments and the evidence marshaled in their support. The presentation will constitute 30% of the final grade.

It is important to stress that the presentations should be understood as text-based and text-centered. The task, in other words, is to critically present a given piece of writing (not a broad, general topic).

Please note: The syllabus includes both primary and secondary sources. For your presentation, you will be asked to choose a **secondary** source.

In presenting the text, please consider the following questions:

- What is the author's research question/s?
- How does the author propose to answer the question (what sources does s/he use? How does s/he place those sources together? Does the author indicate certain general, guiding assumptions? Were you able to identify a conceptual or theoretical framework that served the author as a foundation for placing the evidence together? What is the logical structure of the argument?
- What is the author's answer/s to the question/s posed?
- Is the answer persuasive? In other words, do the evidence, the author's logic and the theoretical frame support the conclusions? Why or why not?
- Are there further questions that are implicit in the piece?

- Written Assignment: At the end of the semester, students will submit a paper exploring in greater depth one of the topics covered in the class, or a topic related to the course but which was not examined directly over the course of the semester. In either case, the paper should examine
 - notions of Jewish nationhood;
 - Jewish nationalism and/or anti-nationalism;
 - efforts to create or conceptualize Jewish national attributes or life.

The paper will constitute 70% of the final grade.

Some General Guidelines for Writing papers (we will discuss more specific guidelines over the course of the semester):

- Begin with a clearly articulated research question—all writing begins with questions!
- Make sure to consider all of the sources related to the question.
- Read those sources carefully and critically; ask them questions, and confront them with one another. Careful, active, and creative reading is one of the most important pieces of serious research and writing.
- Explain in clear language what the central issues are that the sources address. When doing so, give examples and evidence by providing brief quotes.
- Remember: Your job is to make an argument, to present a case. Make sure to know what you are arguing, to articulate it clearly, and to back it up with evidence.
- CITE!—never forget to tell your reader where you are quoting from.

Class Schedule and Readings:

March 6: General Introduction

March 13: Who and What are the Jews?—Identity Crises and the Origins of Jewish Nationalism

Reading:

- Shlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*
- Leora Batnitzky, *How Judaism Became a Religion*

March 20: Origins of the Dilemma: The Jewish Encounter with Modernity

Reading:

- Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870*, (Schocken, 1973), 1-79.

March 27: Shaping responses: Jewish and non-Jewish

Reading:

- Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (eds.), *The Jew in the Modern World—A Documentary History*, Second Edition (Oxford, 1995), 28-44; 125-26; 128-132.
- Ezra Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics* (Oxford, 1993) 3-36.

April 10: No Class

April 17: Preconditions to the rise of Jewish nationalism:

a. The Rise of Nationalism

- Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 1-7; 37-46.
- Anthony D. Smith, “The Origins of Nations”, in *Becoming National: A Reader*, ed. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (New York, 1996), 106-130.

b. The Emergence of Modern Antisemitism

- Excerpts from Richard Wagner, Wilhelm Marr, Karl Eugen Duehring, in Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz (eds.) *The Jew in the Modern World*, 327-334.

c. Europe’s Rediscovery of the Holy Land

- “European Interest in Palestine”, from Alexander Schölch, *Palestine in Transformation, 1856-1882: Studies in Social, Economic and Political Development* (Institute for Palestine Studies, 1993), pp. 47-75.

April 24: Turmoil in Europe and the Emergence of Zionism

Reading:

- Engel, ch. 2.
- Moshe Leib Lilienblum, “The Future of Our People”, in **Herzberg**, pp. 173-77.
- Leo Pinsker, “Auto-Emancipation”, in **Herzberg**, 179-98.
- Herzl, “The Jewish State”, in **Herzberg**, 201-226.

May 1: Nation and Territory in Jewish Nationalism:

Reading:

- Shmuel Almog, "People and Land in Modern Jewish Nationalism", in *Essential Papers*, 46-62
- David Vital, "The Afflictions of the Jews and the Afflictions of Zionism: The Meaning and Consequences of the 'Uganda' Controversy", in *Essential Papers*, 119-132.
- Ahad Ha'am in **Hertzberg**, 249-51; 262-77.

May 8: Ideas of Jewish Nationhood—a Spectrum

Reading:

- Simon Rabinovitch, "Diaspora, Nation, and Messiah—an Introductory Essay", in Rabinovitch (ed.), *Jews & Diaspora Nationalism: Writings on Jewish Peoplehood in Europe & the United States* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2012), xv-xli.
- Simon Dubnov, "Jews as a Spiritual (Cultural-Historical) Nation among Political Nations", in Rabinovitch, 23-44.

May 15: No Class—Conference on "Israel: A Case Study", Marking the 70th Anniversary of the State

May 22: Jewish Speech: Shaping a National Language

Reading:

- Saposnik, *Becoming Hebrew*, 65-92.
- Chaim Zhitlowsky, "Why Only Yiddish?", in Rabinovitch, 96-104.

May 29: The Jewish Nation and Its Others—Zionism and the Arabs of Palestine

Reading:

- Muhammad Y. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism* (Columbia, 1988), pp. 69-87; 232-34.
- Alan Dowty, "A Question That Outweighs All Others": Yitzhak Epstein and Zionist Recognition of the Arab Issue", *Israel Studies* 6:1 (2001), 34-54.
- Arie Saposnik, "Europe and its Orientals in Zionist Culture before the First World War", *The Historical Journal* 49:4 (2006), pp. 1105–1123.

June 5: From Jew to Hebrew: Building a New Society, Shaping a Nation

Reading:

- Engel, ch. 4
- Hayyim Nahman Bialik on the Hebrew University, **Hertzberg**, 279-288.
- Berl Katznelson, "Revolution and Tradition", in **Hertzberg**, pp. 389-95.

June 12: A Nation with a Nation-State: Changing Meanings of Jewish Statehood and Changing Notions of Belonging Since 1948

Reading:

- Caryn Aviv and David Shneer, *New Jews: The End of the Jewish Diaspora* (NYU, 2005), 1-25.
- Alan Arkush, "From Diaspora Nationalism to Radical Diasporism", *Modern Judaism* 29:3 (2009) 326-350.
- Anton Shammas, "At Half-Mast—Myths, Symbols, and Rituals of an Emerging State: A Personal Testimony of an 'Israeli Arab'", in Laurence J. Silberstein (ed.), *New Perspectives on Israeli History: The Early Years of the State* (NYU, 1991), 216-224.

June 18: No Class

Recommended Additional readings for final session:

- The Sharon Brous-Daniel Gordis polemic:
 - Rabbi Sharon Brous, "Heartache": http://www.jewishjournal.com/cover_story/article/heartache_an_email_from_rabbi_sharon_brous
 - Daniel Gordis Response: <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/when-balance-becomes-betrayel/>
 - Brous rebuttal: <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/lowering-the-bar/>
 - David Myers Response: <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/response-to-gordis-a-simplistic-misreading-of-history/>
 - Adam Bronfman response: <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/if-not-now-when-a-response-to-gordiss-criticism-of-brous/>
 - Rabbi Ed Feinstein response: <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/all-the-families-of-the-earth/>
 - Gil Troy Response: <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/we-must-fight-totalitarian-hamas-unapologetically-but-humanely/>
 - Daniel Gordis rejoinder: <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/on-the-absence-of-outrage/>